

21st Century Partnership Monthly Update

October 31, 2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/BLUF: Below are items of interest to Middle Georgia leadership. Thank you for your continued support and, as always, let us know how we can better serve you.

Department of Defense Budget

As predicted, Congress was not able to get a budget across the goal line for the end of the fiscal year and a Continuing Resolution (CR) was passed to get the Government's budget on the other side of the elections. A CR continues budgeted dollars from the previous fiscal year into the new fiscal year. As you would imagine, between the elections and COVID response, the US budget has had no floor time.

The CR is set to expire Dec 11th, hopefully in time for the dust to have settled on elections. CRs are not the best solution as they prevent new programs from starting and new contracts from being signed, but certainly the best of the bad options.

Both the House and Senate have begun early negotiations between the two versions of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Chairman and Ranking Members for the Armed Services committees of both the House and Senate have begun meeting this week to start working out an agreement. This will speed things up once the committee conference begins their work sometime after elections.

Of course, Congressional staff from the House and Senate have been meeting prior to this to help smooth things along as well. It appears there are not too many roadblocks and Chairman Adam Smith, House Armed Services Committee has stated he expects to get the bill done early December.

However, this is only the authorization legislation and does not include the actual funding. The House has passed their version of the 12 Appropriations bills needed, the actual dollars, but the Senate has not yet passed any. Their focus has been on COVID relief since there is a CR in place. Once passed, House and Senate will have to reconcile the versions before voting on final bills to send to the President.

Regardless of who wins the election in November, we are not likely to see too many changes in the current stock of bills. Certainly, we will see shifts in some funding priorities, but the majorities in the House and Senate will not change, nor will the President. At least not until after these bills are passed and signed, assuming they will be able to get to an agreement prior to the 3rd day of January 2021 when the new Congress is seated.

As to next year's budget, there are just too many variables going into this election so, we will be watching the elections closely and prognosticate further at a later point.

Middle Georgia Innovation

Middle Georgia has kicked off the new Middle Georgia Innovation Project led by the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance. This is a US Office of Economic Adjustment funded project with a focus on exploring innovation in the Middle Georgia region and development of an innovation eco-system. The 21st Century Partnership is excited to participate in support of the Georgia Centers of Innovation, Development Authority of Houston County, and the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.

This project will work to explore the innovation eco-system across the 11 counties of Middle Georgia. The team will work with stakeholders across the region to map the current eco-system and provide an innovation gap analysis. This project intends to build innovation in the Middle Georgia region and establish it as a place which will attract new industry, businesses, and residents. This effort will result in resiliency in the region in support of Robins Air Force Base, helping to project Middle Georgia as the strategic asset the Air Force and Department of Defense needs long into the future.

So, where are we already seeing innovation in Middle Georgia? Robins Air Force Base just announced they are becoming a Digital Air Base Wing. As with much of the world, the base realized that with COVID remote work was becoming a fact of life. In fact, the Air Force Vice Chief recently stated that one third of their employees may permanently telework. Of course, touch jobs will always remain...the wrench turners will need to turn wrenches...but many positions are able to work remotely.

Additionally, technology has advanced allowing for the digital transformation of how we work. As a part of Digital Air Base Wing, Robins is looking to expand the virtual presence, develop digital tools and training, and digitize the workplace environment among other efforts. "This is about innovation and ingenuity," said Col. Brian Moore, 78th ABW commander. "We have so many skilled and talented workers with the willingness to accomplish this vital mission. I'm confident we will be successful moving forward in this escalated digital era."

The Houston County Development Authority just this month won the 2020 International Economic Development Council Silver Award for their efforts in establishing Project Synergy, a partnership among Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex, the Houston County Board of Commissioners, the Houston County Development Authority and Houston County Board of Education. This partnership, located off Robins Air Force Base, is a new software engineering lab, and per Angie Gheesling, Houston County Development Authority Executive Director, "will not only benefit Robins Air Force Base, but our community as a whole and even our region."

Add to this, the recent award from NewTown Macon to the 402nd Software Engineering Group for the Blue Sky software lab located in downtown Macon. They were this year's recipient for the "Growing Jobs" award for creating 50 high tech jobs located in a 7,000 square foot high-security satellite software lab in the heart of downtown Macon. Blue Sky opened earlier this year and supports the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex. They are partnered with Mercer, the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, Macon-

Bibb County consolidated government, the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority and NewTown Macon.



Middle Georgia is expanding Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) capabilities in our schools as well. Alexander II Math and Science Magnet School in Macon was just notified they have received their STEM certification from the Georgia Department of Education. This adds to the growing list of 75 schools in Georgia, three of which are here in Middle Georgia.

At the VECTR Center, Georgia Southern has announced they will begin offering Master of Science in Electrical Engineering (this includes Electronic Warfare) at the Center starting in the Spring semester.

This is just a few recent examples of how Innovation is expanding in Middle Georgia. We are excited to assist in building the innovation ecosystem here in Middle Georgia and will certainly keep you informed as this moves forward.

Thank you to our Presenting and Platinum Sponsors! We love being part of a Great American Defense Community!

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